

K R. (a)
CHEAP REPOSITORY.

THE

HUMBLE REFORMER;

OR,

NEIGHBOURLY CHAT.



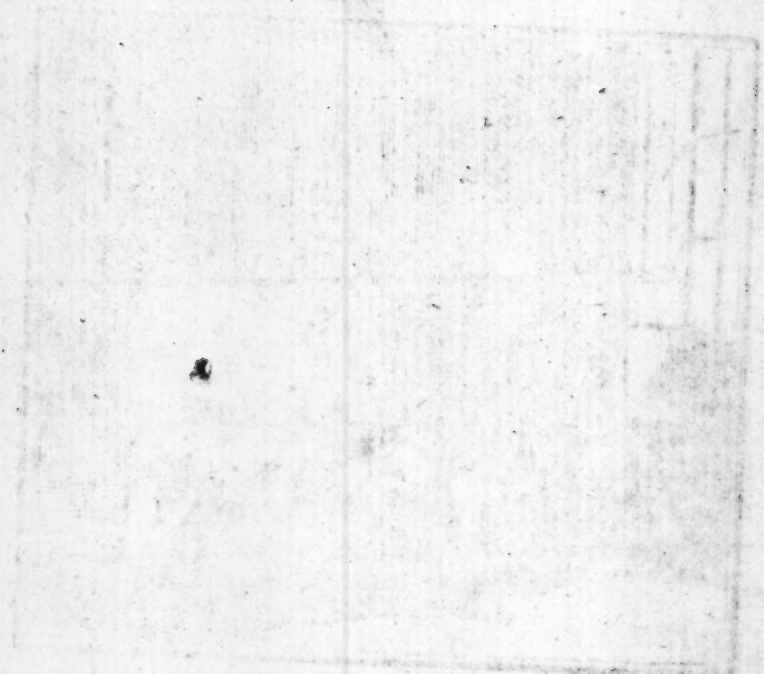
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T H E

Humble Reformer, &c.

THE parish of Lonsdale contained a great number of inhabitants; yet Richard Pearson, on casting his eyes round the church one Sunday afternoon when the service was concluded, could only discern the minister, the clerk, the sexton, the charity children, and four or five old women in red cloaks.

Richard sighed and walked home. In the evening, after having read his bible till his eyes began to ache, he drew his chair still closer to the fire, and again the thoughts of the small number of his fellow worshippers filled his mind with sorrow. "To be sure," said he, "the weather is sharp
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enough,

enough, but I'll be hanged if that would keep one of my neighbours from taking a trot as far as the church to get a fixpenny loaf, or to see a puppet show; and then these great people that are for ever rolling about here and there in their carriages, what should hinder them from going to the house of God?

What indeed; except that they love their pleasure more than their Maker.

The more Richard thought on this subject, the more he lamented that the Sabbath should be profaned and public worship neglected. He had been for many years under carpenter to a large cotton manufactory, and happy in his humble station; he never felt a wish for a change of situation, except when he fancied it would give him the power of being more useful. He could not at this moment help thinking, that if he was Mr. Wood, the curate, or Mr. Miller, the master of the manufactory, he would contrive some means to make the worship of God better attended. "But Ah!" exclaimed he, "a poor carpenter though he serve God ever so faithfully himself, can do nothing for the souls of his fellow creatures!" "Yes," repeated he, a moment after, "yes, he can pray for them. "O God!" continued he, clasping his hands together, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, "let thy public worship be better attended, and let the rich and the poor feel what a joyful thing it is to meet together to worship thee." These few words came from the bottom of his heart, and he felt easier after he had

had uttered them ; but still he could not help wishing it was in his power to add useful endeavours to fervent prayer. At last it occurred to him, that if he was now and then to give his neighbours a word of advice in a friendly way, it might do some good. But again he considered, that as he was no scholar he should not know how to put what he had to say into proper words, so that there was not the least chance he should get any body to listen to him. A passage he had just been reading now shot across his mind, and he turned to his bible to look for it: it was open at the very place, and he read the 11th and 12th verses of the ivth Chapter of Exodus. "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord? Now therefore go and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." "I may take this promise to myself," he continued, while I am endeavouring to do God's work. Perhaps he will assist me, and honour me, by letting me be his instrument. I must not preach to my betters, though I should be sure they are going on wrong. That would be madness, but my poor neighbours mayhap may understand one that talks to them in their own plain way better than one that makes use of fine words. Well, by the blessing of God, I will try what can be done.

Neighbour Watkins and his family seem to have a great regard for me, and respect me more than I deserve. Perhaps God ordered it should be so, on purpose that my advice might have more weight with them. They have a great many good properties

ties, but I am afraid they have not much religion. The first opportunity I'll have a little serious talk with them. Why should I not call or step to them to-night? The present time, as my mother used to say, is always the best for any thing that is good."

The Watkins's lived only four doors from Richard, so he locked his door, and was with them in a moment. It had been for so many years the custom with this pious man, to apply to God when about to engage in any thing of importance, that it seemed a kind of second nature with him to do so; and on this occasion his heart was lifted up to heaven, to implore assistance and a blessing on what he should say.

The father was asleep in the chimney corner, the mother was rocking her infant to sleep, the eldest boy was drawing horses on a slate, the eldest girl was reading a story book, and the younger children were playing about the room. Thus were the family of the Watkins's engaged when their good neighbour entered.

Watkins was so sound asleep, that it was some time before his wife could make him understand that master Pearson was come to see him; and even after he had been sufficiently roused to ask him how he did, he continued so extremely drowsy, that he was little disposed for conversation. Richard was no more talkative: he sat thinking how he should begin upon the business for which he came. He had a very low opinion of his own abilities, and it
had

had been so much his maxim through life, that a poor man's only way of preaching was by *example*, that he was quite at a loss when he wanted to give advice. "My man," said he at last, holding out his hand to little John who was playing near him, "have you been to church to-day?" "No," answered the boy, "No! why how came that about?" "Because Jenny could not go, as she was obliged to take some oranges and chesnuts to Squire Greenhill's; and Joey could not go because his shoes were so bad." "Do not you like to go to church, my dear?" enquired Pearson? "O, yes! I like it very well," said the little fellow, and away he ran to the other end of the room.

Mrs. Watkins then called her children to go to bed, and as she told Pearson she hoped she should find him when she came down, and that he would stay and eat a piece of bread and cheese with them, he determined to put off his advice till after supper. As they were enjoying themselves over a mug of ale, Watkins told his neighbour that he wished he would always come in to them of a Sunday evening; he should have a hearty welcome, and he thought he must find Sunday a wearisome long day shut up by himself.

"Why as to that," answered Richard Pearson, to be sure I cannot help sometimes looking back upon old times, when I had my good woman and my boys always with me; but yet on the whole I generally find the Sabbath a happy day. I go to church twice; and though my eyes begin to grow a little dim, I bless God I can still
read

read for an hour or two at a stretch. I teach my next door neighbour's children the catechism, and then it is such a pleasure when one sits by oneself, to think of God's goodness to one all one's life long, and to think that in a little time one shall be an angel in heaven.

Watkins. Well, neighbour, I do not know how you manage. Though I have generally a good many little jobs to do of a Sunday, and have all my family about me, I must own, that I find it somewhat of a heavy day. I am in a hurry for it to come all the week, that I may have a little rest and enjoyment; and when it comes, I am generally glad when it is bed time.

Pearson. Neighbour Watkins, I hope you'll excuse me; but it is my notion, that it is the doing so many jobs that makes you find Sunday so heavy and disagreeable.

Watkins. Why how so Richard? I am one that loves to be employed; and so if I can find something to be busy about, it stands to reason it must make the day go off lighter.

Pearson. Yes, but neighbour, there are two kinds of work; work for the body and work for the soul; and if a man will work for the body the day that God bids him work for the soul, I cannot think how he should feel himself comfortable.

Watkins. Why one would suppose, with your way

way of talking, I had set all the mills to work, whereas I make the Sabbath as much a day of rest as any one. I do not get up till nine o'clock ; it is a poor man's privilege to enjoy his bed of a Sunday morning. Then, after breakfast, I work in the garden a little while, or I mend a chair, or put up a shelf, or do any of those kind of things my dame chooses to set me about. Then I shirt myself. We have always a hot dinner of a Sunday, and we sit over it and enjoy ourselves a good while. Then I play with my children and nurse the little one, and in the evening I hear them the catechism, and read two or three chapters, till I grow so drowsy, that I fall fast asleep, as you found me when you came in. And now pray where is the harm of all this ?

Pearson. The fourth commandment tells us, that on the Sabbath day we shall do no manner of work. Now when you have always some worldly business or other to do at home, I do not see how you can be said to keep this command, notwithstanding you would be shocked at the thought of going to shop and setting the mills a going.

Watkins. Well, it is my notion, that it is a man's duty to get every thing about him tidy and comfortable; and if he works hard for his family all the week, I see no sinfulness in his setting about a few innocent jobs of a Sunday.

Pearson. But I cannot help thinking, if you were
to contrive as much to get your little jobs out of
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the way in the course of the week, as you do to bring them all together into Sunday morning, you might have every thing about you as tidy and comfortable as at present, and yet never profane the Sabbath by that kind of business that does not properly belong to it. When you came from work one evening, and your wife told you that two of the pales were broken down, and the pigs came into the garden, I heard you make answer, "Well, let them be for a day or two, they will be a good job for Sunday." Another time your little John came running to you with his broken waggon, and asked you to mend it. "Take it away now, my boy," said you, "I am tired. Bring it me again on Sunday, and I'll mend it for you with all my heart;" and I have often heard you say, 'My garden is quite a wilderness: I must work hard to put it a little to rights when Sunday comes.'

Watkins (after a pause.) Well! I do not say this may not be the case sometimes. As I told you before, I am apt to find Sunday a heavy day; and so if there are any little matters to while away the time, I am not at all sorry it should be so.

Pearson. But I no more wish you to make Sunday an *idle day* than a *working day*.

Watkins. Well! let us hear what is to be done then.

Pearson. In the first place, I would have you go to church.

Watkins. I do sometimes.

Pearson.

Pearson Yes, when there is a charity sermon, or you happen to have a new coat.

Watkins. Well! I may have been a little neglectful of my church of late years; but sure it seems to be a hard thing for a poor man, who has but one day in the week to himself, to be obliged to turn out twice a day, and spend all his time at church, when he wants to be enjoying his family.

Pearson. What! has a poor man no blessing to ask of God, no sins to confess, no mercies to be thankful for, no soul to be saved?

When I meet a fine gentleman on his horse, with his footman behind him, going to take a ride in the time of divine service, it grieves me to the heart, and I say to myself, "That man is so rich and so happy, that he is not willing to go any where, where he may chance to hear how soon he must take leave of all his treasures. But when I see a poor man, perhaps a beggar in ragged cloaths, shivering with cold and ready to die with hunger, lurking about just inside the walls of the Church-yard, as if he was so in love with misery, that he was afraid to hear of a world where he should never know what misery was, I cannot find words to tell you how it amazes me. Indeed, to my way of thinking, we poor people, who know what it is to be brought to our last shifts, and have often no friend but God, have more need of religion than any body in the world.

Mrs. Watkins But we can say our prayers at home Mr. Pearson.

Pearson. That is not enough; because God has commanded

commanded us in a great many different places in scripture, to meet together in public worship; and our blessed Saviour himself set us the example. Besides, we are most of us ignorant and forgetful, so that we ought to go to be taught our duty by God's ministers, or to be reminded of it at least.

Watkins. Well now, Richard, I'll tell you how it is. When I was a lad, I was noted for a constant church-goer; and I went with pleasure, because it was to hear a parson who made fine discourses. He was always plain and to the purpose. Sometimes he would speak in such a cutting way, that he has brought the tears into my eyes; and sometimes he would talk so comfortable about God and heaven, that if a man had ever so many troubles, he would make him think that they were all as light as a feather. Oh! I could have sat for hours to hear that man; and then he had a manner with him, as if he was in earnest in what he said; and he lived as he preached, and was always doing good to the poor.

Mrs. Watkins. He his dead now; but he was a fine man to be sure.

Pearson. Well! such a minister is one of God's greatest blessings I do think.

Watkins. I never missed a Sunday while I lived in his parish. Dr. Ellis was parson here when first I came. I had heard that he was counted a hard man, so I had not much notion of him: however,
my

my mistress knows, that, according to my custom, I went to church. But he had a sour look, and a kind of manner as if he wanted to send us all to the Devil; I could not bear that; and by little and little I began to stay away. This young Mr. Wood that we have now, is but a wildish kind of man they say, and I am sure he never comes among us. His sermons may be very fine perhaps; but I know I cannot hear half he says; and when I can, I do not understand; so I do not see much use in my wasting my time to hear him.

Pearson. I am afraid, indeed, if what they say is true, he gives himself up too much to pleasure, and does not take so much trouble with his flock as a good shepherd ought to do. But that is an affair between him and God. We are not to judge another man's servant. We should mind what he tells us, whether he minds it himself or not. As to his discourses, though I do not pretend to be a judge of those matters, yet I do not think they are so plain and so christian-like as they should be; and he has a lazy way of preaching, as if he did not think of what he was saying, and did not care whether he was understood or not: but yet, if a man is attentive, he will every now and then hear a little something that may do him good, if it is not his own fault. I will give you an instance in a sermon we had this morning. The text was from the 1st. Epistle to Timothy, chapter i. verse x. "Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." I was pleased with the text, because I was in hopes I should hear something
about

about heaven. Instead of that, he only went on to tell us, what in old time the people used to think would become of them after they were dead; how that some did not know what to think, and how others supposed if they were good they should go to a place called *Elysium* I think it was, where they should not be very comfortable neither, and should come back again to earth some time or other, and fill new bodies, and then he told us, what some poet said about it, and brought in a number of hard names that I could not understand. Well, thought I; this seems rather heathenish stuff; but still I tried to listen with all my ears. "But now," says he at last, "all this darkness is done away. Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. Even the poor have the gospel preached to them. The poorest among us knows more the worth of his soul, and what shall become of him when this short troublous life is over, than all the great men in former times could find out with all their learning." These were not his words, but they were something to that meaning. I blessed God in my heart, that he had not let me be born at the time when no one knew but he might die like a dog, and never live again; and I thought it was well worth attending to all the sermon for those few words.

Watkins. Well! I have heard Parson Wood three or four times, and never could edify at all.

Pearson. I am afraid you let your mind run upon other things; however, if you do not like the sermon

sermon there are the prayers, and the prayers you must allow are a fine form of words, and the most ignorant may understand the best part of them. We seem to have great notions of equality now a-days. I often think, if we are on a footing with our betters at any time it is at church. We meet together to pray to the same God, who is the father of us all. The rich kneel down, and own themselves to be sinners as well as the poor; and the poor hope for forgiveness as well as the rich; and hope for it in the same way too; from the blood of the same Saviour; and they all look forward to a meeting in the same place, where there shall no longer be any difference betwixt them.

Watkins. Well, neighbour, I'll think of what you say; and perhaps in future I may be more constant at my church than I have been.

With what pleasure did the worthy Richard hear him pronounce these words: but he had not yet done only half his business, and, turning to Mrs. Watkins in the most friendly manner, he asked her if she would not accompany her husband?

"There is no use in my going," said she, "for, to my misfortune be it, spoken I can't read."

"But you can join in the prayers," said Pearson; "and if you cannot read the word of God at home, it seems to me as if you should still more make it a point to go once a week to hear it read and explained."

Mrs.

Mrs. Watkins. But I have got my family to mind.

Pearson. O, neighbour! I am afraid that is only an excuse; because, you know, when you go out washing for a day you let Jenny have the care of them all. Take those that are big enough with you, and leave Jenny to nurse the little one, and then the other part of the day stay at home yourself and let her go. Indeed a father and mother do not do their duty that do not bring up their children to be religious, and to go to church.

Mrs. Watkins. I am sure my children go as often as any in the parish.

Pearson. I know you send them a great deal oftener than you go yourselves; but when they find you never set them the example, they will think that going to church is only fit for children, and as they grow older they will leave it off. Besides, for what poor excuses you sometimes keep them at home. Only think of Joe not going to-day because his shoes were old.

Mrs. Watkins. I must say, I think it is very indecent for people not to go reputably to the house of God.

Pearson. I think we ought to go with our flesh clean and our cloaths as reputable as we can make them; but it is a bad excuse to stay at home because they are shabby. God will not hear my prayers the less, because I have a worse coat than my neighbour. I should think it a poor way of my
son's

son's shewing his respect for me if he was to stay away and tell me it was because he could not afford to buy a coat good enough to come and see me.

There was still one more thing upon Richard's mind; but he did not know how to express himself as he wished; however, as his neighbours had listened very attentively to all he had said, he determined to conquer false shame, and, after a silence of some minutes, he said to Mrs. Watkins, "As you are so good as to let me make thus free, I'll take upon myself to mention something else. That little fruit shop of yours, Mrs. Watkins, it has given me many a heart ache of a Sunday."

"Why, I must needs say," replied Mrs. Watkins very honestly, "it has often struck me that it is not quite the thing: but it is what every body else does."

Pearson. Well, but shall I remind you of the words of scripture, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

Mrs. Watkins. But is there such a very great harm in selling a few nuts and cakes on a Sunday?

Pearson. Why, neighbour, when you are making up your half-pennyworths of gingerbread, and looking to see if the money you take is good, and reckoning your change, can you say your head is not filled with your week-day business? That it is, I'll venture to say, as much as if you kept a larger shop; then mayhap somebody sends for apples to make

make a pie, and when you have not the right sort in the house, you are obliged to send to the gardener's for them. So you make the gardener go on with his business, and you keep one of your children from church to buy the apples, and to take them home to the person that ordered them.

Mrs. Watkins. But I shall affront all the neighbourhood if I will not let them have things of a Sunday.

Pearson. You must tell your constant customers, that you will be obliged to them if they will bespeak what they want of a Saturday evening; and, I dare say, there are some who will like you the better for finding you make a conscience of spending Sunday properly.

Watkins. Well, this is very fine talking for you, Pearson, who have only yourself to provide for; but we make our fruit-shop answer better of a Sunday than all the rest of the week put together; and with such a family as ours, we must be full of contrivances, and we must not be too scrupulous.

Pearson. Would you go on the highway and rob a traveller for the sake of your family?

Watkins. No, that you know very well I would not, though we were all starving.

Pearson. Then why, neighbour, should you break one command of God more than another? since you know, it was the same God that said, "Keep

holy the Sabbath day," and said, "thou shalt not steal." Besides, how shall we shew ourselves to be Christians, if we are not willing to part with the least profit in the world for God's sake? only think of our Saviour's words, "he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Now must not you be said to love your children more than God, when you give up his own day to work for them?

The best way to draw down a blessing on your family, is to bring them up religiously, and to set them a good example. This is what every poor person can do for his children, and it is the richest inheritance he can give them. God will not let them or *you* be losers in the end, because you feared to transgress his commands. I do not say you must expect to be rewarded directly. You must not say to yourself on Sunday evening, "Well, now I might have earned a shilling or two to-day, but as I would not do it for fear of offending God, I may count upon taking a shilling or two more in the course of the week." No, no, if we were always sure of our reward directly, our love to God could hardly be said to be put to the trial. When we are willing to give up any worldly profit for his sake, we may depend upon it he will reward us; but it must be in his own time, and his own manner; and if he is mercifully pleased to make us happier throughout eternity, for any little sacrifice we can have made him, O! my dear friends, what gainers shall we be by the bargain!

Mrs.

Mrs. Watkins. Well, I never thought so much of the matter before; and, if my husband is agreeable to it, I think I'll leave off selling things on a Sunday.

Pearson. Oh! I am sure your husband is too good a man to wish you to do what is not right, and, my good fellow, said he, clapping Watkins on the back, "you will promise me that you will not again go on with your carpentering or gardening, or any thing of that kind, on the Lord's day?"

"Why, I doubt, if I do not," said Watkins smiling, "I shall find the Sunday pals on confounded heavily!"

Pearson. No, I'll be bound for it, you'll not if you employ it properly. Part of the day you may talk to your wife, and play with your children: then you have got to instruct them, and to read your bible.

Watkins. I am tired of reading so much of the same thing.

Pearson. Well now, I always find something new in my bible and testament let me read it ever so often. But besides the bible, there are many other books proper for Sunday reading, that are very edifying and entertaining. Though these are hard times for poor folks in one sense, blessed be God they are good ones in another. Never in my memory was it so easy for children to get instructed as since the
Sunday

Sunday schools have been established ; and never was there such variety of halfpenny and penny books for the poor, full of good advice and entertaining stories.

Watkins. If one buys one, one has soon read it through, and then there is an end of it.

Pearson. A good book, in my notion, will bear reading more than once. But I will tell you what we will do. You and I will join together to get as many of them as we can. As I have not such calls for my money as you, I'll lay by two-pence a week, and you shall lay by a halfpenny or a penny when it can suit you. Perhaps we may find two or three more who will be willing to club with us, and if so, we may get a good stock of those pamphlets, and we will lend them about one among another, and to read them with attention will be a very pretty employment for part of Sunday.

Watkins. Well, that is a good thought of yours, and I do not care if I do join with you.

After a short silence, *Pearson* said, " I am then doing of another employment, quite fit for Sundays, by which, if it pleases God to give his blessing, we may do a great deal of good. I have often heard it said, what a pity it is there is no Sunday school in this parish ; and our great folks do not seem much inclined to set one on foot. You can read, *Watkins*, and so can I ; what do you say to our opening a Sunday school ? To my knowledge, there is many a poor person hereabout would be glad their children should get a little learning, only they cannot afford to pay their schooling.

Watkins.

Watkins. No neighbour, I do not think I can do that. I shall become a laughing stock among our workmen, and they'll call me *preacher*, and *school-master*, and I do not know what besides.

Pearson. well, but will you mind *that*, when you think the good you may do to those children as long as they live, and of the gratitude of the parents, and, above all, of the reward we may hope for from that Saviour, who has promised to look upon every act of kindness done to the least of his children as done to himself? The school-room shall be at my house, because there we shall interrupt no one, and have no one to interrupt us. Now, if I let the parents know in the course of the week that they may send their children next Sunday morning, I may depend upon your coming to assist me?

Watkins. I do not say I will not, but I would not have you make too sure of me.

Pearson. That is as much of a promise as I can expect the first moment. You do right to take time to reflect. And now I think I must wish you good-night. I hope my good friend, you will not take amiss any thing I have said.

"I take it very kind of you, I can assure you, Mr. Pearson!" said Mrs. Watkins. "I thought you a little meddlesome first of all," said her husband; "but now I find you talk in such a friendly way that it is for our good, I like you ten times better than I did before."

Pearson

Pearson then shook his neighbours heartily by the hand, and wished them good-night. With a heart overflowing with gratitude, he poured forth his thanks to God for the prospect before him of serving his fellow creature, and then going to-bed, he past the night in those peaceful slumbers which are known only to the righteous man.

A. R.



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HISTORIES.

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